Vehicle thefts tend to increase in winter

December, January and February are statistically the worst months for vehicle thefts in Washoe County, according to a four-year analysis done by the Washoe County Sheriff’s Office.

Based on this analysis, the sheriff’s office predicts an increase in vehicle thefts in the coming months unless steps are taken by the public to help reverse this trend.

The sheriff’s office believes that the increase in motor vehicle thefts during periods of colder temperatures is primarily due to the number of vehicles that are left unattended while warming up. Auto thieves are aware of this practice and look for opportunities to take advantage of it.

Vehicle owners can help take away this opportunity by never leaving their vehicles unattended while the vehicle is running.

According to the Nevada Division of Insurance, many drivers are not aware that their auto insurance policy may not cover vehicle theft or damage to the vehicle caused by wind, fire, flood, a falling object, or vandalism. Comprehensive coverage can help protect consumers from incidents other than those caused by a collision.

Snowpack deeper than a year ago, but still not great

By Veronica Rocha, Los Angeles Times

First, the good news: Thanks to a series of frosty winter storms, California's snowpack is now double what it was last year at this time, according to officials.

Now the bad news: The amount of water actually contained in the fluffy white stuff is still well below average.

Snow levels measured statewide on Tuesday showed that water content was 56 percent of the historical average for Dec. 1. One year earlier, the water content measured just 24 percent of average.

Read the whole story

Letter: Ameriprise invests in community by volunteering

To the community,

Every year in November, Ameriprise Financial advisors and employees participate in national days of service in partnership with Feeding America. This effort centers on helping the 49 million Americans, including 16 million children and 5.3 million seniors who face hunger in the United States.

On Nov. 9, the South Lake Tahoe Ameriprise Financial Services

Inc. office sponsored a Bread & Broth Adopt A Day of Nourishment organized by Rick Gross, to join this nationwide effort to feed the hungry.

“We feel honored to help,” said Gross. “We would like to thank Bread & Broth for the opportunity to give back to the South Lake Tahoe community.”

B&B would like to thank Ameriprise Financial Services for the contribution of $250 which fed over 100 dinner guests and helped provide giveaway bags filled with fruit, vegetables, dairy products, canned goods and breads/pastries.

Gross, a private wealth advisor, was joined by his Ameriprise Financial team members Melinda Gross, business development manager; Terry Hickey, financial advisor; and Liz Palmer, client service manager. These four sponsor crew volunteers are to be applauded for taking the opportunity to help people in need by giving their time and effort to support Feeding America and Bread & Broth’s goal of easing hunger for those in need.

Carol Gerard, Bread & Broth

Invasive clams a threat to Sand Harbor

By Anne Knowles

CARSON CITY – Nevada officials are worried about the arrival of Asian clams at Sand Harbor.

Charles Donohue, administrator and state land registrar for the Nevada Division of State Lands, said a small population of

the invasive species has been detected at the popular Lake Tahoe beach. On Nov. 30he was addressing the Nevada Legislature's interim committee that oversees the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency and Marlette Lake water system.

He told *Lake Tahoe News* two age classes of the clam were recently discovered by a graduate student at UC Davis after an initial review cleared the area.

Donohue said there was some speculation that the clams ended up there via discharge from the ballast of a boat that had traveled somewhere where the clams are commonly found. They have been in Lake Tahoe since 2002.

They are about 2 to 3 centimeters, with some 1-2 millimeters – like a grain of sand. They produce calcium – which Lake Tahoe doesn't naturally have much of. Calcium is needed for quagga mussels to survive and thrive; that is one species that has yet to be detected in Lake Tahoe.

Donohue said an assessment will soon be made and, if necessary, a quick mitigation before the clams can do any near shore damage.

"Sand Harbor is a treasure," Donohue said.

Amy Berry, chief executive officer of the Tahoe Fund, after hearing Donohue's presentation, said the Asian clam mitigation could become one of the group's projects for 2016.

She said two projects the nonprofit may do next year are acquisition of Johnson Meadows in the upper Truckee River and adding lookouts to Taylor Creek.

For 2017, the group is considering work on the Incline Flume Trail.

The Legislative Committee for the Review and Oversight of the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency and the Marlette Lake Water System meets six times during the interim. The remaining

meetings will be at Lake Tahoe.

After its work, the committee can submit 10 bill draft requests to the 2017 Legislature.

LTN publisher to discuss top 5 stories of 2015

Kathryn Reed, *Lake Tahoe News* publisher, will be on Austin Sass' "The High Sierra Report" to discuss the top five local stories of 2015.

The program will air on Lake Tahoe TV (available to Charter Cable customers) on Wednesdays throughout December at 1:30pm, 4:30pm and 7:30pm.

Tahoe Adventure Film Festival ready to roll

Tahoe Adventure Film Festival is the annual gathering of the who's who of outdoor adventure set.

This is year 13 of Todd Offenbacher's local festival. TAFF celebrates the adventure sports community with newly released films of daring exploits and epic adventures in some of the most remote places and harsh conditions that test the human spirit. Filmmakers capture the power and intensity of skiing, snowboarding, kayaking, rock climbing, surfing, mountain

biking, BASE jumping and other heart pounding sports. Many of the segments are special edits including previews of films that have not been released.

This year the festival will include three special edits that highlight the importance of decision-making that all adventurers must face. These films delve into the mindset of the adventurer and how each athlete deals with assessing risk during every outing, making judgments about the consequences of pushing the limit. “On the Fence” by Chris McNamara, climber and SuperTopo author, is a self-examination of some close calls that caused Mac to stop BASE jumping. “Reach for the Sky” by filmmaker Ryan Cleek chronicles the fast paced career and ambition that catapulted Cam Zink into pro-mountain biker status and how Zink has chosen to balance it with family life. “The Unrideables” by Red Bull Media combines skiing and parachute flight to access terrain that would otherwise be inaccessible.

For the past 10 years, Offenbacher has presented the Golden Camalot to honor action and adventure sports pioneers for their astounding contributions, excellence, achievements, and leadership.

The 2015 Tahoe Adventure Film Festival debuts Dec. 11 at MontBleu in Stateline. The doors open at 6:30pm, followed by the films at 7:30pm. Tickets can be purchased at the MontBleu ticket office or by calling 775.588.3515

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2016 Tahoe Adventure Film Festival Western U.S. Tour:
Petaluma – Jan 29, 2016
Park City – Feb. 13
Jackson Hole, Wyo. – Feb. 15
San Francisco – Feb. 18
Mammoth – March 3-5
Reno – March
Minden – April.

TTD steering loop road project to completion



The city-county street looping to the left behind the casinos may one day be Highway 50. Photo/Provided

By Kathryn Reed

Planning for the South Shore's loop road is nearing the finish line, with no intention of going to the voters even if that were a possibility.

Carl Hasty, executive director for the Tahoe Transportation District – the lead agency for the project, believes between the information that has been provided and the future opportunities for the public to weigh in that people have had ample opportunity to voice their opinions.

This bi-state agency, if it were to get the go-ahead from the

California and Nevada departments of transportation, could reroute Highway 50 behind Harrah's Lake Tahoe and MontBleu casinos and turn the current highway into a city street without South Lake Tahoe's blessing. TTD is a federal entity that has a higher level of authority than a city or county.

The City Council could put an advisory question to voters asking if they want the loop road or not. The outcome, though, would not be a mandate. The council could still support or not support the project, and TTD doesn't have to listen to the voters or the council.

It could hurt TTD if the council were to come out against the project because it would likely make it more difficult to get federal funding.

And if eminent domain were needed to acquire property, TTD would need the city to make that happen. It would take four out of the five council members to reverse current policy that bans the use of eminent domain.

The goal of TTD is to turn just more than a mile of the current Highway 50 at the state line into a road managed by South Lake Tahoe and Douglas County, and make the current local street behind the casinos into a highway. The purpose is to make the commercial area more walkable and inviting.

Hasty did not know if the realignment would save drivers time. The focus is on flow. He also could not tell *Lake Tahoe News* what the speed limits on the respective roads might be. Today there are four traffic lights on Highway 50 in the stretch that will be affected. The new route would have two, at Heavenly Way and Harrah's.

Tuesday night was the most recent opportunity for people to give input. More than 100 people spent time Dec. 1 at Lake Tahoe Resort Hotel looking at the five alternatives, including one to do nothing. People were asked based on the exhibits what they thought of the possibility of affordable housing,

mixed use buildings, gateway features, site options and if they had any general comments to make.

Mike Riley has been listening to the loop road talk for 20 years. He called Tuesday's presentation the best he has seen to date. He supports the concept, but is worried about the people who would be displaced, and wonders who will be responsible for the upkeep of the trail from MontBleu to Van Sickle Bi-State Park.

Mark Cuthright has driven Lake Parkway-Montreal Road (the roads that could become a federal highway) after it snows. The grade makes it sketchy, he said. He questions the logic of having people on that stretch of road instead of the flat and straight highway of today.

For Dave Kurtzman, he likes the mix of affordable housing, and the possibility of getting federal money to make it a reality.

For all of this to come to fruition as TTD envisions, no properties on the Nevada side would be adversely affected. On the California side it's a completely different story. Multiple residences and businesses would be bulldozed, likely starting before the current easterly intersection of Highway 50 and Pioneer Trail in South Lake Tahoe and then going back toward Montreal Road.

Mike McKeen, who owns the property where Naked Fish and Powder House are located, was initially a staunch opponent of project, going so far as to create signs saying as much that were outside the businesses. Today he is a proponent, envisioning a revamping of his property.

His biggest concern now is where people will park if the new commercial and residential structures are built.

For Hasty, what he likes is the evolution of the plan into what he calls a true community revitalization project.

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Notes:

· South Lake Tahoe City Council will get an update on the project Dec. 7. The meeting at Lake Tahoe Airport starts at 9am.

· There will be an open house Jan. 26 from 5-7pm at Lake Tahoe Resort Hotel.

· The draft environmental studies are expected to be released in the first quarter of 2016. People will have 60 days to comment.

Opinion: Casino industry regulation changes 'needed to happen'

By Howard Stutz, Las Vegas Review-Journal

The 2015 Nevada Legislature adjourned on June 1, but the session never ended for state gaming regulators.

Six bills passed by lawmakers and signed by the governor brought aspects of Nevada's gaming industry into the 21st century. But the legislation also required months of debate to change existing gaming regulations and write new laws.

"These were changes that needed to happen," said Gaming Control Board Chairman A.G. Burnett. "We've given the industry some good tools to work with."

Lawmakers and regulators addressed skill-based slot machines,

increased sports book operations, specified the definition of illegal bookmaking, characterized equipment used to manage gaming, changed the effect of the state's live entertainment tax on casinos, and added rules requiring resorts to more stringently monitor their nightclub venues.

Read the whole story

Asset forfeitures surpass burglaries

By Christopher Ingraham, Washington Post

Here's an interesting factoid about contemporary policing: In 2014, for the first time ever, law enforcement officers took more property from American citizens than burglars did. Martin Armstrong pointed this out at his blog, *Armstrong Economics*, last month.

Officers can take cash and property from people without convicting or even charging them with a crime – yes, really! – through the highly controversial practice known as civil asset forfeiture.

Last year, according to the Institute for Justice, the Treasury and Justice departments deposited more than $5 billion into their respective asset forfeiture funds. That same year, the FBI reports that burglary losses topped out at $3.5 billion.

Read the whole story

6th-grade books frame climate change as uncertain

By Amy Quinton, Capital Public Radio

Sixth-grade is usually the first time California students are formally taught about climate change as part of their science curriculum. A recent study shows some textbooks present the subject as a debate stemming from opinions rather than science.

Stanford and Southern Methodist University researchers analyzed the language in four sixth grade science textbooks from major publishers. All were published in 2008 and adopted for use in California.

The authors found that the books contain language that frames climate change as possibly happening and that humans may or may not be causing it.

Read the whole story